

THE LEISURE HOUR.

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—*Cooper.*



NEWS IN DAME UPCHURCH'S POST-BAG.

THE MORTONS OF MORTON HALL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT VAN BROEK PROPERTY."

CHAPTER I.—A SHIPWRECK.

SOME fifty years ago there stood on the outskirts of the little secluded village of Codford, in one of the western counties of England, a pretty villa known as Rose Cottage. It was so called from the profusion of monthly roses which adorned its exterior. Roses not only clothed the porch, and half-hid the windows, but clambered over the walls, and clustered around the chimneys, so that during the seasons of summer and

autumn the cottage was almost concealed from the view of the passing traveller.

Rose Cottage was at this period the abode of one Captain Talbot and his wife and family. There were two children—a daughter, Mary, then in her twentieth year, and a son, Henry, sixteen years of age. At the date at which my story opens, however, Mrs. Talbot and her daughter were, excepting the servants, the sole residents in the cottage, since Captain Talbot, who commanded an Indiaman, was absent at sea, and his son Henry was pursuing his studies at Eton.

Mrs. Talbot, who had for some months past felt

herself declining in health, was becoming anxious for the return of her absent husband, who had been during the past two years sailing from port to port in the East Indian and Chinese seas. The captain had in his last letter hinted at the probability of his speedy return, and his wife hoped that the next letter she received from him would announce that he was at length about to sail for England.

Day after day for a month Mrs. Talbot and her daughter had anxiously watched for the return from the neighbouring post and market town of old Dame Upchurch, who for a term of thirty years had occupied the responsible position of post-woman and common carrier between the village and the post town in question. Day after day they had seen the sturdy old dame pass by, tugging at the halter of her donkey, and apparently exerting more strength to drag the cart than did the lazy animal between the shafts, without once stopping at the end of the lane which led from the high road to the cottage.

The anxious wife and daughter were beginning to grow weary with that "hope deferred which maketh the heart sick," when at length, one morning while Mary Talbot was in the garden busied in culling a nosegay of autumn flowers to adorn the breakfast-table, before her mother should make her appearance down-stairs, she saw the well-known donkey-cart draw up at the end of the lane, and presently Dame Upchurch was seen slowly approaching towards the cottage.

Instantly the young lady dropped the flowers, exclaiming, "A letter from papa at last!" Then recollecting many previous disappointments, she added, "Perhaps, though, it is only from Henry. Mamma wrote to Eton the other day."

Still, however, hopeful that there might be a letter from her father, she sprang to the garden gate, flung it wide open, and flew half-way down the lane to meet the slow-creeeping post-woman.

"Oh, Nancy, so you've brought us a letter at last! Where is it from? We have been looking for a letter from the East Indies—oh, so long!"

"T'poastage be haif a crown, miss," mumbled the old dame, fumbling meanwhile in her bag to find the letter. "It ha' coom vrom vurrin parts, aw reckon, vor 't ha' a mort o' poastmäärks on't."

"It is from India, then!" cried the young lady gleefully, and almost ready to weep with joy. "It is from dear papa," she went on, as she seized it from the old dame's hand, and recognised the superscription.

"Come in doors, Nancy, till I get you the money; and, if you like to go to the kitchen, cook shall give you your breakfast. You must be tired after your journey; and you can bring your cart up the lane, and hitch the donkey's halter to the gate-post."

"Thank'ee, miss," replied Nancy, as she followed the young lady up the gravel-walk to the house. "Donkey'd staun a' day wheer un be if aw'd let un, an' aw'm used t'journey, though moy owd legs bean't zo strong as 'em weer. Aw'm thinkin', miss, as arter t'year aw'se turn t'donkey-cart ower to moy daäter, an' rest m'owd boanes vor t'remaind o' my days."

By this time they had entered the house. Mary Talbot gave the old dame half-a-crown, and sixpence for herself, and sent her to the kitchen to get some breakfast; and, this done, went to seek her mother.

Mrs. Talbot, however, had seen Nancy Upchurch enter the garden, from her dressing-room window, and came out to meet her daughter on the stairs.

"A letter from India at last, mamma!" cried Mary, triumphantly exhibiting the letter, as she and her mother

descended the stairs together, and entered the parlour, where Mrs. Talbot eagerly received the letter from her daughter's hand.

She quickly broke the seal, after a glance at the well-known handwriting on the outside; and a flush of colour overspread her pale cheeks, and her eyes brightened, as she pored over its contents, while Mary stood looking on, unwilling to interrupt her mother, yet burning with impatience to learn what news the letter contained.

At length, unable longer to curb her impatience, she cried—

"Oh, dear mamma, how slowly you read! Tell me, is papa really coming home?"

"He is, my love. He is on his way," replied Mrs. Talbot, her eyes glistening with delight as she looked up into her daughter's face. "You shall read the letter yourself, presently," she continued. "Your papa sailed from Calcutta on the first of September; but deferred writing until he reached the Mozambique, as he could not be certain, until then, whether he was to sail direct for England. Let me think. This is the twentieth of October. Nearly two months have elapsed since he sailed from Calcutta. The ship must have doubled the Cape of Good Hope by this time."

She resumed the perusal of the letter, but presently again addressed her daughter.

"Ah, here he writes—'You may expect to see me at home early in December, if we make a good run from the Cape; and the Andromache is a fast sailer, if she has anything like fair wind and weather. How glad I shall be to see you and the dear children again!'"

Mrs. Talbot finished her reading without further remark, and then handed the letter to Mary, who withdrew to the window to obtain a better light, and immediately became absorbed in its contents; but the letter was crossed, and, impatient as she had been while her mother was reading, it occupied her a long time to decipher the close writing.

The contents of the letter, however, were simply such as a fond and long-absent husband and father would naturally write to his wife and children. There were loving expressions oft-times repeated, and anxious hopes and fears, and questions relative to family matters, which had as well been left unwritten, since they could not be answered until the writer stood in the presence of the loved ones. But the gist of the letter may be comprised in a few words.

Captain Talbot was coming home. The voyage, though long, had been exceedingly prosperous, and one more such voyage would enable him to retire with an ample fortune, and spend the rest of his days in the bosom of his family, and the society of his wife and children.

This was all. But it was sufficient to inspire the wife and daughter with hope and joy.

Mrs. Talbot only wished that her husband would retire at the termination of his present voyage. Though in good health when the Captain left England, she had been a long time ailing, and she fancied that her illness was attributable, in a great measure, to the anxieties natural to a sailor's wife during her husband's absence at sea, and that she would soon recover her health, were those anxieties removed for ever. She felt that she could be well content with the independence her husband had already gained, could she persuade him, on his return, to remain on shore with her for the future.

The chief portion of Captain Talbot's wealth, however, was embarked on board his ship. Not only had he a large amount of money on board, but he had likewise,

on the very eve of sailing, invested several thousands of pounds in the purchase of cargo, which he was aware would realise a vast profit in England; and, in a postscript to his letter, he mentioned his great regret that he had, in the hurry of departure, omitted to insure his own property (though the ship and general cargo were fully insured), before he sailed from Calcutta.

"I have been inexcusably careless and neglectful," he wrote, "in omitting to insure the large amount of property I have on board belonging to myself. I was so much occupied in Calcutta with business relating to the ship's cargo, and other matters, that I put off the insurance from time to time, until at length, in the hurry and bustle of departure, I forgot it altogether until the ship was clear of the Hooghly river and in the Bay of Bengal, when, of course, it was too late, since there is no possibility of effecting an insurance at any port in the Mozambique."

"I trust, however, that all will be well, and that, with the blessing of Providence, my usual good fortune will attend me. Still it is not a pleasant thing to feel that, if any accident should befall the ship, those whom I best love must suffer for my unpardonable neglect."

"How foolish of papa to annoy himself about insurance!" said Mary. "As if anything in this world would be of any value to us if any harm were to happen to him. I'm sure," she continued, "I should think little of any other misfortune in such case. Besides, papa's sure to bring his ship safely home. Hasn't he always done so? And isn't he known as one of the most able navigators among all who sail to and from the East Indies?"

"Your dear papa has always been very fortunate at sea, my love," replied Mrs. Talbot. "As he says, Providence has hitherto blessed his endeavours, and we will hope and pray that the blessing of that good Providence may still attend him, and bring him home to us in health and safety. But the sea is a fearful element, and sometimes all the skill and courage of man are of no avail against the fury of the tempest."

"One would think, mamma," said Mary, somewhat pettishly, "that you foreboded evil just because papa, in his hurry, has neglected to insure his property."

"No, my dear Mary," returned Mrs. Talbot, "I do not forebode evil. I hope and trust, and believe, that, under the guidance of a kind protecting Providence, your dear papa will return to us as he has hitherto done, in health and safety; and little indeed would I value the wealth of this world if my husband did not share it with me."

"Mamma, I hardly thought what I said," replied Mary, approaching her mother and kissing her cheek.

"I know you meant no harm, my love," said Mrs. Talbot, returning the embrace; "and now," she added, with a smile, "we'll put aside all doubts and fears, and look forward hopefully to the day when your papa will once more be with us."

But, though Mrs. Talbot had said truly that the world's wealth would be valueless in her eyes if her husband were not with her to share it, she could not help feeling somewhat anxious for her children. She seemed to have an intuitive knowledge that she would not long be spared to watch over them, and she shrank, in spite of her faith and trust, from the thoughts of their being left, in the first flush of youth, and accustomed from infancy to every comfort and luxury that a sufficient income could provide, orphaned of both parents, and exposed to the temptations and miseries of poverty. She wished that her husband had not neglected

to insure the property he had embarked on board his ship, and felt the weight of an additional anxiety upon her mind. Still she strove to banish these thoughts, and blamed herself for her lack of faith and trust in God, and at length almost succeeded in entirely banishing her fears.

The welcome letter was read and re-read; the servants were informed that their master was coming home, and seemed almost as much pleased as were their mistress and her daughter. They had been many years in the Captain's service, and he had never returned from a voyage without bringing to each and all some substantial, tangible proof that no one connected with the home he loved was forgotten by him while he was absent from it. A letter was written to Henry Talbot at Eton, to acquaint him with the glad news, and old Nancy Upchurch was commissioned to bring a copy of the "Shipping Gazette" from the post-town regularly until the Andromache should be reported as having arrived at Portsmouth.

The invalid wife improved daily in health, for hope and happiness reigned paramount at Rose Cottage. Although the cold and cheerless winter would soon be at hand, the sun seemed to shine more brightly upon its inmates, the birds to carol more blithely in copse and hedge-row, the few autumnal flowers that remained in the garden to linger longer than usual in bloom, and to shed a more exquisite perfume, and all nature, animate and inanimate, to rejoice with them in their joy.

Then, as the day drew near when the ship was expected to arrive, the cherished *dii penates* of the household—most of which were presents brought home by the Captain at different times from distant lands—were arranged and re-arranged to suit their fancy. Each seemed to remind the mother and daughter of some former happy return, and to reassure them that he who had then returned to them in safety would so return again; and if sometimes—as a passing cloud will momentarily obscure the sunshine on the fairest summer day—a slight shadow of anxiety darkened their hope, neither would permit it to dwell upon them.

It was a fine time for old Nancy Upchurch, for the old dame always contrived to reach the cottage with the newspaper at the breakfast hour, and was thus sure of a good breakfast in the kitchen; besides which she frequently received a trifling gratuity from one or other of the ladies, as a recompense for extra trouble.

Still week after week passed away, and no tidings of the Andromache appeared in the columns of the "Gazette." Nor was there anything remarkable in this, since the Indiaman was famed as a fast-sailing ship, and was as likely as not to report her own arrival at Portsmouth.

At length, however, on the 2nd of December, the following paragraph appeared in the list of "Ships spoken at sea."

"Off Cape Finisterre, on the 24th ult., by the clipper-schooner Swallow, of Liverpool—Mason, master, arrived at that port on the 1st, with fruit from the Mediterranean—the ship Andromache, of London, Capt. Henry Talbot, eighty-nine days from Calcutta. All well."

Mary received the "Gazette" from the old post-woman, as usual. In a moment her rapid glance lighted on the paragraph, and, springing away into the parlour, eager with excitement, she cried—

"Good news, mamma! Good news at last! Papa's ship has been spoken, off Cape Finisterre, on the 24th. Listen, mamma," and she read the paragraph aloud.

"Where is Cape Finisterre?" she went on. "Ah, I recollect: on the coast of Portugal."

An atlas was produced, and the map of Europe

consulted, and the distance between Cape Finisterre and Portsmouth was computed.

"It cannot be more than eight or nine hundred miles, mamma," cried Mary. "Eight days ago! This is the 2nd of December, and the vessel that spoke the *Andromache* has arrived in port. Why, papa may arrive to-morrow—perhaps to-day!" and she clapped her hands with delight at the thought, and skipped about the room like a child.

Mrs. Talbot, though pleased at the news, was, however, less sanguine than her daughter as to her husband's immediate arrival. The wind had been easterly for several days, and consequently adverse to ships bound up Channel; and she had been a sailor's wife long enough to know that clipper-schooners such as the *Swallow* can sail, as sailors say, "almost in the wind's eye," and make good headway, when heavy ships, such as the *Andromache*, are scarcely able to make any progress.

Still, withal, she felt that it was possible that her husband might make his appearance at any moment. He was just the man to land at Portsmouth, leave his ship in charge of the pilot, and take a seat in the stage for Salisbury, without announcing his arrival by letter, and he could easily hire a conveyance from Salisbury to Codford.

So, throughout the bleak December day, the expectant wife and daughter sat at the window and watched, and fancied that every sound of wheels on the hard frozen highroad came from the vehicle that was bringing home the long-absent husband and father; and when the short hours of daylight were over, and night closed in, they would not close the shutters, but set a lighted candle in the window to guide the wanderer to his dwelling, should he arrive in the darkness.

"Papa will think it a beacon-light," said Mary; "but he will know who are the watchers. 'Rose Cottage light' we will tell him it is. Oh, mamma, mamma, I do so wish he may come home to-night."

"I don't think it likely, my love, though it is possible," replied Mrs. Talbot. "The wind is still from the east; it may be some days yet ere the ship arrives in port."

It was midnight ere they sought their chambers. The candles were then set in the bed-room windows; but, though they went to bed, a long weary hour elapsed ere they could compose themselves to sleep. Wearied with the hopeful anxieties of the day, they at length slept soundly. At four o'clock in the morning Mary was awakened by a violent storm of wind and rain, and, springing out of bed, she threw a cloak around her and went into her mother's room, where she found Mrs. Talbot already up and dressed.

"Mamma," she whispered, in an awe-struck voice, "hark how the wind blows! The cottage seems to rock from its base. And hear the rain! Is it not terrible?"

"It is, my dear. It woke me an hour ago, and I rose and dressed myself. The gale must be fearful in the Channel. I hope the *Andromache* is not near the coast!"

"Perhaps she is already in port, mamma. She may have arrived last night, before the gale came on."

"Yes, love, may be; I hope so: yet I fear, Mary."

"If not, papa would not run in to the land if he saw signs of a gale. I recollect to have heard him say so, mamma. Listen to the frightful wind that is blowing now. Ah, it lulls again!"

"Yes, he was ever cautious," murmured Mrs. Talbot, as a furious squall that threatened to blow down the house subsided. Then louder to Mary, "If I could be

sure he had plenty of sea-room, I would have no fear for such a vessel as the *Andromache*."

"Mamma, papa is a skilful sailor. He thinks nothing of a gale of wind. Depend upon it, if he is not safe in port, he will keep well out to sea. Remember, mamma, how, only yesterday, when we heard that his ship had been spoken, you said that you had a firm trust in Providence. Retain that trust, mamma."

"I do, love; at least, I try. But hark at the wind again!"

"Papa may, after all, be snugly asleep in the inn at Portsmouth, mamma," replied Mary.

And so, seeking to comfort each other, yet feeling that they stood in need of comfort that neither could impart, the anxious wife and daughter sat, their arms wound round each other, till day-dawn, listening with fear and trembling to the furious wind and fast-falling rain.

But, though daylight came at last, it brought with it no relief. The gale continued to increase in violence. The storm which that night burst upon the English coast swept over the Channel with the fury of a hurricane, and was long remembered with pain and sorrow. Its violence was felt far inland. Houses and barns were unroofed. Trees that had withstood the storms of centuries were uprooted by the force of the wind. Coaches were blown over on the roads; bridges were swept away by the swollen streams caused by the torrents of rain by which the tempest was accompanied; cattle and sheep were drowned by hundreds; many human beings perished, and property was destroyed to an incalculable amount. But it was on the Channel coast that the main force and fury of the gale were expended. Vessels in harbour were cut down, and sunk at their anchors, when their crews fancied they had gained a haven of safety. Other vessels were driven on shore; many foundered at sea; boats were crushed against the wharves; and the streets of the various seaports were inundated by the unprecedented rising of the tide. It was long before the mischief wrought at sea was fully known. For two days and nights the wind continued unabated in its violence, and during that period no ships sailed from port, nor did any arrive, save in a dismantled and almost wrecked condition.

Terrible was the anxiety of those who had relatives or friends at sea, within the range of the storm, and none of these suffered more than the late hopeful, happy inmates of Rose Cottage. Such was the severity of the gale in their immediate neighbourhood, that old Dame Upchurch, who, for more than thirty years, had never failed to make her daily journey to the post-town and back, was detained at home. No letters nor newspapers were therefore received by the inhabitants of the village, and Mrs. Talbot and her daughter were left to linger in suspense, unable to learn what disasters had occurred at sea. It was not until the second day after the storm had subsided that they received their missing copies of the "*Shipping Gazette*." But no letter was received with the newspapers. Amid all their trouble and anxiety and terror, they had clung, as a drowning man will cling to a straw, to one desperate hope, which was that the *Andromache* had arrived in port before the gale commenced. Now this hope was torn from them—though, had Captain Talbot arrived in port, he would most assuredly have written, in order to quell his wife's and children's anxiety, even if he had been unable to leave his ship.

The *Andromache*, then, had not arrived.

With the courage of despair they glanced over the columns of the "*Gazette*," filled with sad accounts of

shipwreck and loss of life, and felt relief when they found that there was no mention of the Indianman.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

They began to gather courage. The *Andromache* was a staunch ship—Captain Talbot a skilful seaman, with experienced officers and men under his command. They persuaded themselves that, foreseeing the approach of the gale, he had not ventured near the land, or that, perhaps, he had put into some port on the coast of France. That would account for his long delay after the arrival of the *Swallow*.

The next day's "Shipping Gazette" encouraged this hope. An editorial paragraph ran thus:—

"Great anxiety has been felt respecting the *Andromache*, Indianman, Captain Talbot, which vessel was looked for at Southampton for some days before the late terrific gale commenced. This anxiety has been in some degree allayed by the report of Captain Somers, of the *Lapwing*, West India mail-packet, which came into port last night in a disabled condition; in fact, almost a wreck. Captain Somers reports that, on the first day of the gale, he saw a large vessel, which he believes to have been the *Andromache*, lying to, about fifty miles west of Cape Ushant. The ship had lost her mizen and fore and main top-gallant masts; but she appeared to be making tolerable weather. The captain says that, in all his long experience, he has never witnessed so severe a gale, nor such a tremendous sea."

The anxious wife and daughter comforted themselves with the hope thus afforded them, for two days longer, refusing to acknowledge, whatever may have been their secret fears, that any serious accident had happened to the *Andromache*, and still looking every hour, every minute in the day, for Captain Talbot's arrival; but the delusive hope upon which they had fed was soon succeeded by blank, crushing despair. A few brief lines in the newspaper sufficed to tell the terrible story, how more than a hundred human beings, crew and passengers included, met their death, and passed in one short hour from time into eternity.

"It is our painful duty," again wrote the editor, "to state on the too sure authority of the keepers of the Lizard Lighthouse, that shortly after daybreak on the morning of the 4th inst., when the gale had reached its height—a large frigate-built ship was seen to go on shore on a reef a few miles from the Lizard Point.

"The keepers watched the fearful sight from the gallery of the lighthouse; but so terrific was the force of the gale, and so tremendous the sea, that it was utterly impossible to render any assistance to the unhappy crew, who battled manfully with their terrible fate to the last moment. Again and again the ship was veered round, and held off from the fatal reef. At length, however, the vessel's masts went by the board. She became utterly unmanageable, and was swept with furious force right on to the pointed rocks. She fell over on her beam-ends, and in a moment every soul was swept from her decks. The sea made a clean breach over her, and in less than a quarter of an hour she parted midships and became a mass of broken timbers; but, long before this, all on board had met a watery grave.

"The tide was turning when the ship struck, and all the bodies were washed out to sea; but from several pieces of wreck and cargo that subsequently floated on shore, and have since been picked up, there remains not the slightest doubt that the hapless vessel was the *Andromache*, East Indianman, commanded by Captain Henry Talbot, formerly of the Royal Navy, which vessel has been for some days past expected at Portsmouth from Calcutta.

"The *Andromache* had on board a crew, officers and men, all told, numbering sixty souls, and forty-five passengers, none of whose names have yet been ascertained; but there can exist no doubt that all have perished. The general cargo, we are informed, was very valuable, and was, together with the ship, fully insured; but we learn from the underwriters at Lloyds that, by some oversight, a large amount of specie, and several tons of private cargo which belonged to Captain Talbot himself, were—as per advices from Calcutta—uninsured."

This was all that was ever known respecting the loss of the ill-fated *Andromache*. Not one of her crew or passengers escaped to tell the fearful story of the shipwreck, though, of course, the names and conditions of the lost passengers became known in process of time.

The same newspaper which conveyed to the lately hopeful and happy wife and daughter the dread intelligence that their sole earthly hope and stay was lost to them for ever in this world, likewise conveyed to them the sad news that with the husband and father they had lost all their worldly wealth.

As it was afterwards learnt, Captain Talbot had been engaged in very heavy speculations in India, in which he had embarked the whole of his means. These speculations had proved successful, even beyond his most sanguine expectations. All his worldly wealth was on board his ship, and the one act of negligence which, as though he had foreboded evil, he had spoken of with regret in the last lines he had ever penned to his wife and children, had reduced them from independence to poverty.

Henry Talbot returned home on hearing of his father's death, to find his mother on her dying bed. The terrible shock she sustained proved too much for her already enfeebled frame, and she died only a few weeks after the loss of the *Andromache*, leaving her son and daughter, comparatively speaking, almost penniless; and, so far as she knew, without a friend able and willing to aid them—without a relative, at the same time, able and willing to acknowledge the claims of kinship, in all the wide world.

THE NAUTICAL ALMANACK.

BY EDWIN DUNKIN, F.R.A.S., ROYAL OBSERVATORY.

Of the numerous almanacks that are published in England by far the first in scientific and national importance is the "Nautical Almanack," published by the Board of Admiralty for the use both of astronomers and of seamen. As this almanack is less popularly known than many others in common use, some account of its origin and history, its contents and uses, may be acceptable to the readers of the "Leisure Hour."

Before astronomical observations were made with the precision of modern days, and when the art of navigation consisted mainly in a knowledge of the coast line, much scientific attention was given to that great national problem, the discovery of a method for determining the longitude at sea. The subject was considered of such importance that the Government of the day, in 1714, offered a reward of twenty thousand pounds for an easy, practical method available for nautical purposes. Since that time hundreds of impracticable schemes have been forwarded to the Commissioners of the old Boards of Longitude, each author apparently appearing satisfied with his solution of the problem, and of course claiming the reward. The investigations were not confined to one class of scientific men. We have lately had occasion to look over a huge manuscript volume of these

documents, and have been considerably astonished at the great ingenuity displayed by men of all ranks of intellect, some exhibiting great mathematical power, others plainly showing the results of the minds of illiterate, but original thinking men. Some, however, contain only wild fancies of the writers. Still the question was not even partially solved to the satisfaction of the authorities till the remarkable improvements made in the construction of clocks and chronometers by John Harrison. In 1758 this celebrated mechanician produced a chronometer which was sent on a trial voyage to the West Indies. After an absence of little more than five months, the error of the chronometer was found, on its return, to be only sixty-five seconds. For this remarkable success, which was the first practical step in the accurate determination of the longitude at sea, Harrison received a reward of five thousand pounds. This grant was afterwards increased by an additional sum of ten thousand pounds, other chronometers having been constructed for the Board of Longitude with equal accuracy. On one occasion Stukely, the antiquarian, paid a visit to the workshop of Graham,* then a celebrated clock and instrument maker, to view a wonderful time-piece by Harrison, which is probably one of those still preserved at the Royal Observatory. Stukely relates: "I saw Harrison's famous clock last winter at Mr. George Graham's; the sweetness of its motion, the contrivances to take off friction, to defeat the lengthening and shortening of the pendulum through heat and cold, and to prevent the disturbance of motion by that of the ship, cannot be sufficiently admired."

To make Harrison's invention a complete success it was necessary that predicted places of the sun and moon should be published some time beforehand, so that when observations were made at sea they might be compared directly with the computed lunar distances from the sun and principal stars, determined from the best tables extant. Hence the origin of the "Nautical Almanack." It owes its actual existence to a memorial presented to the Commissioners of the Board of Longitude by Dr. Nevil Maskelyne, Astronomer Royal, on February 9th, 1765. This memorial was supported by several officers of East India ships, who had lately made use of a work compiled by Dr. Maskelyne, entitled "The British Mariner's Guide to the Discovery of the Longitude at Sea and Land, within a degree, by Observations of the Distance of the Moon from the Sun and Stars, taken with Hadley's Quadrant." These officers all agreed in testifying that they had made observations according to the rules laid down in this book at various opportunities, and that "they had found the said observations easily and exactly to be made; so that the longitude resulting always agreed with the making of land, near the time of making the observations, to one degree; and that they could make the calculations in a few hours, not exceeding four; and they are of opinion that, if a nautical ephemeris were published, this method might be easily and generally practised by seamen." This memorial of Dr. Maskelyne had the desired effect, for a nautical ephemeris was at once ordered to be compiled and printed.

Shortly before this time M. Mayer, a German mathematician, had constructed lunar tables by means of which the place of the moon in the heavens could be computed for any stated time. Owing to the decease of Mayer,

these tables remained in manuscript. In order that they might be made more useful in the calculation of the new almanack, they were printed at the expense of the British Government, and an application was also made to Parliament for a grant of money to Mayer's widow. She afterwards received a reward of three thousand pounds. The celebrated mathematician Euler assisted Mayer in the theoretical portions of his work, for which the Government gave him three hundred pounds. Dr. Maskelyne was appointed superintendent of the new ephemeris, an office which he retained till his death in 1811.

The first "Nautical Almanack" was published in 1766; it was available for the following year. About twelve months only were occupied in its calculation and preparation for the press—a marvellously short time when it is considered how difficult the arrangement of a novel work of this kind must have been. The first number will ever remain as a great memorial of the skill and industry of the originator. It was announced to the public as follows:—"The Commissioners of Longitude, in pursuance of the powers vested in them by a late Act of Parliament, present the public with the Nautical Almanack and Astronomical Ephemeris for the year 1767, to be continued annually; a work which must greatly contribute to the improvement of astronomy, geography, and navigation. This ephemeris contains everything essential to general use that is to be found in any ephemeris hitherto published, with many other useful and interesting particulars never yet offered to the public in any work of this kind."

By the publication of the "Nautical Almanack" for 1767 and subsequent years, and by the continual improvements in the construction of chronometers, the longitude at sea was practically determined with moderate accuracy at the close of the last century. At the present time, astronomical observations have been the means of so far improving the lunar and planetary tables that they may be said to have, in conjunction with the use of the beautifully-made modern nautical instruments, conclusively disposed of this great problem, for the solution of which so large a reward had been offered.

During Dr. Maskelyne's superintendence of the "Nautical Almanack," its success was complete. It was annually received with eagerness by seamen, and it gained not only the approbation of the naval service, but also of all lovers of the science of astronomy, in England and on the Continent. The French *savant*, M. Lalande, remarked that "there are almanacks published at Bologna, Vienna, Berlin, and Milan; but the 'Nautical Almanack' of London is the most perfect ephemeris I have ever seen."

On the death of Dr. Maskelyne, the superintendence remained in abeyance for some years, being in the hands of no responsible person. No wonder that the reputation which the almanack had attained in his lifetime was soon lost. It became inaccurate and incomplete, and could no longer bear a favourable comparison with the productions of other countries. Astronomical knowledge had been remarkably progressing; but the "Nautical Almanack" remained not only stationary, but retrograded. The attention of Government having been drawn to this state of its affairs, the question was referred to a new Board of Longitude appointed in 1818, of which Dr. Wollaston, Captain Kater, and Dr. Thomas Young were a resident sub-committee. Towards the end of that year, Dr. Young was made secretary to the Board, and superintendent of the "Nautical Almanack." The first volumes published under his direction did much to retrieve its character; but the irregular system

* It is worthy of remark, that there are several clocks constructed by Graham still in use at the Royal Observatory. Some slight modifications have, however, been made in some of them. He also made the mural arc and the zenith sector with which Dr. Bradley made important astronomical discoveries. These instruments are also preserved at Greenwich.

employed in making the calculations left no hope of any permanent improvement being effected without some radical change in its personal organisation. It is a remarkable fact that the computations were made in different parts of the country. It seems almost incredible that, in a time of slow travelling and expensive postage, a system in which all the calculations had to be transmitted several hundred miles to be verified, should have continued so many years without any attempt at centralisation. The father of the writer of this article, resident at Truro, Cornwall, was one of these scattered computers from 1800 till his removal to London, in 1832, being responsible for five months' computations of each year.* We can well remember, in our early days, the extra labour borne by him in preparing duplicate copies of his work, to be transmitted to the examiner in Derbyshire, and the length of time which necessarily elapsed before any answer could be expected. His subsequent experience in the "Nautical Almanack" office in London formed a great contrast to this irregular manner of producing the national ephemeris. As an illustration of the scattered residences of the computers in 1828, we may state that one lived at Arbroath, Scotland; another at Truro; a third at St. Hilary, near Marazion; a fourth at St. Mabyn, Cornwall; a fifth (a lady) at Ludlow, Shropshire; and a sixth at Tideswell, Derbyshire. Dr. Young, the superintendent, resided in London.

After the death of Dr. Young, which took place in 1829, a proposition was laid before the Council of the Royal Astronomical Society by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, with a request that they would take into consideration the advisability of forming some plan by which the "Nautical Almanack" might be prepared more in accordance with the advanced state of astronomical science. In conformity with this request, a committee consisting of the principal members of the Society was appointed. They recommended that an office should be established in London, in which all the calculations should be made; also, that there ought to be a complete change in the form and contents of the almanack, making it at least double in size, and adding valuable matter useful to the astronomer. The proposed alterations were adopted by the Council of the Astronomical Society, November 19th, 1830, and subsequently ordered by the Government to be carried into effect.

In the first series of the "Nautical Almanack," up to 1833, the information was intended principally for maritime purposes, but not wholly so. That portion, however, inserted for the benefit of astronomers, was not sufficiently accurate for comparison with the observations, and consequently was practically useless for all delicate researches. One great object of the committee was to recommend that in the new series the positions of the sun, moon, and planets should be calculated with the precision which the best modern tables would allow. Then, with regard to the improvement of nautical astronomical observations, it was considered that the determination of the position of a ship at sea ought not to

be the only object of a seaman's solicitude, because that might be attained by a much smaller work than the "Nautical Almanack," and by the use of very inferior observing instruments. But the committee also considered that an equally important branch of nautical astronomy, consisting in the exact determination of the position of well-known points on the earth's surface, should also be provided for. These observations cannot be effectually and properly executed by methods available only on board a ship, but by delicate instruments placed firmly on solid ground. Observers in this position require all the astronomical aid which can be given them from the best tables, arranged in a form most convenient for practical and immediate use. In the new series of the "Nautical Almanack," the first volume of which was for 1834, this two-fold object has always been kept in view. Thus the seaman can still find everything he requires, and the astronomer at the same time has at his fingers' ends the tabular positions of the principal stars and planets for every day in the year. This enables the latter to point his telescope at any hour of the day or night to the celestial object selected for observation, and then to compare the results of his labours with the numbers previously computed. He is thus continually keeping a check on the lunar and planetary tables used in the construction of the "Nautical Almanack," and providing fresh data for their correction.

The result of the deliberations of the committee of the Astronomical Society having been adopted by the Government, an office was established in London in 1831, since which time the whole of the calculations have been made there. The superintendence after Dr. Young's death was temporarily undertaken by Mr. Pond, at that time Astronomer Royal. On the formation of the new office, Lieutenant Stratford, R.N., was appointed superintendent, assisted by a staff of skilled computers. The office is at present in Verulam Buildings, Gray's Inn, the director being the well-known astronomer, Mr. John Russell Hind, who succeeded Mr. Stratford in 1853.

Now that we have given a brief history of this truly national book, we propose to take a rapid glance through its contents—not, however, with a critical eye, but with a desire to explain in a few popular words what would probably appear unintelligible to most readers on the first inspection of its pages. Let us commence by turning the leaves over rapidly from the beginning to the end of the volume. Nothing is visible but an immense assemblage of figures. To those, however, who understand their use, every one of these figures has its peculiar significance. Every line we see before us is the result of a long and laborious calculation, nothing being printed but what is absolutely necessary. The tables from which nearly all the work is now computed have been originally constructed from the labours of the astronomical observer, principally, however, from the observations of the sun, moon, and planets made at the Royal Observatory, Greenwich. Hence the solar tables by M. Le Verrier, the lunar tables by M. Hansen, the tables of Mercury, Venus, and Mars, by M. Le Verrier, and others, depend almost entirely on the Greenwich astronomical observations of the last hundred years. It is from this cause that a popular error exists in the minds of many persons that the home of the "Nautical Almanack" is at the Royal Observatory.

The almanack may be divided into two divisions, one to be used by seamen and astronomers, the other by astronomers almost exclusively. The first division may be termed the monthly section, because here the matter for the different months is arranged according to one plan,

* It may not be amiss to state here that Mr. William Dunkin was an early boy-friend and school companion of Sir Humphrey Davy, both natives of Penzance, Davy being the senior by three years. The attention of Mr. Davies Gilbert, M.P., afterwards President of the Royal Society, was drawn to both of these youths on account of their scientific tendencies; one for chemistry, the other for mathematics and astronomy. He gave them the use of his valuable library at Tredrea, his seat near Penzance. The brilliant career resulting from the introduction of young Davy to the Pneumatic Institution at Bristol, in 1798, is well known to all. Mr. Gilbert afterwards placed young Dunkin under the care of the Rev. Malachy Hitchens, at St. Hilary, Cornwall, then computer of the "Nautical Almanack" under Dr. Maskelyne. Mr. Dunkin soon became one of the principal computers of that work, in which employment he remained till his death in 1839.

the whole being divided into twelve sub-sections under the names of the months. We will now briefly go through one of these sub-sections. Let us take as an example that for January, 1868. First, we have no calendar containing the ordinary information of popular almanacks, nothing more indeed than the days of the week and month. On the first opening we have the exact position of the sun in the heavens at Greenwich noon of each day, with some other information useful to seamen as well as astronomers. On pages 4 and 5 of each month the longitude and latitude of the moon is given for each day at noon and midnight, and of the sun for noon. The time of the moon's southing, and the angular value of the moon's semi-diameter and parallax, are also given. Pages 6 to 13 are occupied with the right ascension and declination of the moon for every hour throughout the month. Pages 14 to 19 contain the distances of the sun, planets, and principal stars from the moon for every three hours. These lunar distances are inserted solely for the benefit of mariners; and it is by the comparison of the observed lunar distances with those corresponding in the almanack that the longitude at sea is generally determined. Travellers also, when in unknown lands, have availed themselves freely of this portion of the volume. M. du Chailin made an extensive series of observations of lunar distances during his late journey into Ashango Land. The geographical positions of some of the stations visited by him have therefore been determined with considerable accuracy. The late Captain Speke also used this method for determining longitudes in his explorations from Zanzibar to Lake Victoria Nyanza. The writer is able to form an opinion on the value of such observations, from a careful examination of the astronomical labours of these and other African travellers, and from the valuable geographical results he has obtained from the discussion of their observations. Pages 20 and 21 of the sub-sections contain the data for accurately computing the position of the fixed stars, useful only to the astronomer. These occupy the last pages of each month's information. This first division of the "Nautical Almanack" absorbs one half of the volume.

The second division of the work is intended purely for the use of the astronomer, and is prepared for the meridian of the Royal Observatory. It is, however, easily adapted for use at other observatories, by applying small corrections depending on the difference of longitude. We will endeavour to exhibit the contents of this division in as few words as possible. 1. We have the positions, as viewed from the sun and earth, of the planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, given for Greenwich noon of each day, and of Uranus and Neptune each fourth day. By means of the daily positions of these planets, particularly of Venus and Jupiter, the latitude, time, and variation of the compass, may be found with nearly as much facility and accuracy as by the sun. 2. The same information for the large planets, and a few of the minor planets, at the moment of transit across the meridian of Greenwich. 3. Standard places of 147 of the principal fixed stars given for every ten days throughout the year. Several of these stars, with some others, are used at Greenwich as clock-stars, from the observation of whose transits true Greenwich time is found daily. It is scarcely necessary to draw attention to the national importance of these observations, as it is now generally understood that the time of all the clocks in the country is indirectly kept in order by this daily reference at Greenwich to the great star-clock of the heavens. The mechanical and electrical arrangement made for the dissemination of true time

from the Royal Observatory to all parts of the country, now forms a most important part of the daily duties of that establishment. 4. Forty pages of the second division are occupied with the apparent positions of the moon, and of certain selected stars near her, at their respective times of Greenwich transit. By the corresponding observation of these objects on different parts of the earth's surface, a very accurate method for the determination of the difference of longitude between any two places is obtained. 5. The remaining portion of the book contains principally full details of all miscellaneous phenomena. First we have eclipses visible in 1868, with the elements of calculation. Then a list of stars occulted or obscured by the moon passing over them. These are succeeded by an extensive list of the phenomena of the moons of the Jovian system, consisting of eclipses in the shadow of Jupiter, transits over its disc, disappearances behind the body of the planet, together with the dark shadows of the satellites on the planet. Accurately computed times of the principal phenomena are given, and approximate times for the remainder. The concluding portion of the almanack contains a list of the principal planetary phenomena; elements of Saturn's ring; the libration of the moon; time of high water at London Bridge daily, and at various ports and places at the full and change of the moon; a few tables used by nautical men principally; a list of public and private observatories; and finally, an explanation of the different sections of the work.

In addition to the preceding valuable matter, the almanack contains rough ephemerides of the minor planets. In the volume for 1870, and in future volumes, these are intended to be omitted, as they are published in the Berlin Astronomical Almanack in fuller detail, and consequently more useful to the astronomer.

The United States of America also publishes a "Nautical Almanack," prepared by order of Congress. It is almost a fac-simile of our own with regard to the contents, the arrangement of the tables being copied as nearly as possible from the British "Nautical Almanack." France has also its national ephemeris, known by the name of the "Connaissance des Temps." It cannot bear comparison with ours. The "Berliner Astronomische Jahrbuch" is a valuable work, especially for the great attention given to the minor planets. Several other countries have their astronomical ephemeris; for example, the Milan ephemeris, and those of San Fernando, in Spain, and Coimbra, in Portugal, are well known to astronomers.

When the new series of the "Nautical Almanack" was first published, it was established as a rule that the work should eventually appear yearly four years in advance. Although since 1834 the establishment of ocean steamers has so practically shortened the distance between opposite portions of the globe that there is no longer the same object for such early publication, yet it has been thought advisable to continue the system as originally designed. In 1867, therefore, the volume for 1871 appeared, while the computers are engaged on years still farther in advance. The annual circulation amounts to more than 20,000 copies.

HER MAJESTY'S MAIL IN THE FAR-WEST.

BY J. K. LORD, F.R.S.

"OUR English post-office is a splendid triumph of civilisation." In this memorable saying of Lord Macaulay, reference is made not merely to the postal organisation of the United Kingdom. The chief office in London, the railway mail-vans, the travelling post-offices, and



HER MAJESTY'S MAIL IN NORTH-WEST CANADA.

the whole arrangements for the collection and delivery of letters, are wonderful results of well-devised organisation and ably-directed labour. In all its most conspicuous parts the machinery is so perfect, and works with such smoothness and regularity, that we are apt to forget the vastness and variety of the service. But it is not alone in the organisation and working of the home department that "our English post-office is a splendid triumph of civilisation." In the remotest bounds of the empire the service is sustained with marvellous results. Our picture carries the mind to regions whose wild solitudes were never startled by the railway whistle, nor cheered by the mail guard's bugle. Yet, even in the far-west of British America the postal service displays an energy, punctuality, and order such as may stir all other public departments to envy and emulation. The lonely English occupant of a hunting-station or fur-store in the wilds of North-west Canada, looks not in vain for the welcome despatches from "home." Where railways are not, and wheel carriages find no road to run upon, the mail is taken up by sledges, and the Indians, with their dogs, represent the officers in charge of Her Majesty's mails.

My readers will better understand the kind of out-posts and stations to which letters are conveyed, by perusing the following paragraph extracted from the "Quebec Chronicle":—"Travellers by steamer up the river Ottawa will have observed on the north shore of the Lake of Two Mountains a small village situate on a cliff, showing a face to the lake of bright yellow sand; and they have been told that they see an Indian village. The community here resident have just petitioned for the establishment among them of a post-office. The memorial has the signatures of Irroquois and Algonquin chiefs—Saoatis-kurai-iarakoen-kane-gatake, Jakomiskakie, L. Satexasenoten, Sosekatsien Haitenton, B. Kekatewaje, and others. It is proposed to give the village the name of Oka."

But the postal service in Canada reaches far beyond such villages as Oka, whose population rejoices in names astounding to a London letter-carrier. During part of the year Her Majesty's mails are sometimes forwarded two thousand miles, after losing the help of all steam or horse-power.

In the summer months the mails are conveyed to all the settlements along the lake shores by steam-vessels, and these huge fresh-water seas afford every facility for a safe and rapid navigation. But when the lakes are covered with a stratum of ice, strong enough and of sufficient thickness to bear up the traffic of London, then a very different system of transport is necessitated. Contracts are entered into by the postal authorities, for the transmission of the mails, with persons who quite understand the work. Throughout all the lake districts on Lakes Huron and Superior the contracts are generally sub-let to Indians and half-breeds, who travel on snow-shoes, and pack the mail-bags upon light sleighs, which are usually tugged along by six dogs, worked in pairs side by side, as shown in our illustration. By providing frequent relays, and, at the same time, being perfect masters in the art of travel, these hardy mail-carriers contrive to transport the letters at the rate of about sixty miles a day.

It was once my misfortune, when cruising in a little schooner upon Lake Huron, to be caught in the ice, and frozen in hard and fast near a small settlement called Cas-ka-awning. As the dwellers at this desolate village had no more provisions for the six months of biting winter before them than were barely sufficient to supply their own wants, I had no alternative but to pack up a small

bundle of necessities, put on my snow-shoes, and tramp off for the nearest place wherest I could pass the winter, leaving my vessel and my tiny crew to take care of themselves as best they could. The haven of refuge towards which I bent my steps was the Bruce mine—a copper mine situated on the north shore of Lake Huron.

Winter commences in this icy region about the beginning of October, and when once the ice has fairly "set" on the lakes, all communication with the rest of the world is entirely cut off—excepting the traveller resorts to the employment of snow-shoes and dog-sleighs—until May in the year following. As an illustration of the intensity of the cold, I may state that the carcasses of sheep, pigs, and bullocks intended to be stored for the maintenance of the miners and their families during the winter, are exposed to the air immediately after they are killed and skinned, until frozen as hard as marble. After that they are hung up in large sheds to be consumed as required. The freezing is a perfect preservative; meat so treated, if kept from thawing, would remain sound and good for years. To be eaten, a joint is chopped off with an axe, soaked in tepid water until sufficiently thawed, and then cooked in any manner best suited to the tastes of those who are going to devour it.

But my present object is to tell how, in this out-of-the-way place, our communication with the rest of the world was kept up, and to describe Her Majesty's mail in these regions.

I have sometimes travelled with the mail-carriers from place to place along the route, and I can truthfully say that it is scarcely possible to picture a more weird scene of desolation than a wide expanse of frozen lake, covered thickly with snow, presents to the eye, more especially when journeying through the night—a course generally followed if there happens to be a sufficiency of light to discover the track. Night travelling is always preferable, because the snow is less trying to eyes by night than it is during the day; hence the risk of becoming snow-blind is materially diminished. Nothing seems to retain any semblance to reality as we tramp along over the snowy waste, with the dogs trotting after, jingling their sleigh-bells. The silvery moon spreads her pale light upon the snow, and the rays, instead of being absorbed or reflected, seem, by some mysterious agency, to accumulate, until one is tempted to believe himself splashing through a shallow lake of light. Every visible object appears to be transformed into something intangible and unreal; the tracks upon the snow grow into huge proportions; trees dotted along the lake shore resemble giants such as we read of in fairy tales; a hillock of drifted snow takes the appearance of a mountain. Now one fancies rippling water is directly in the path, which, on a nearer approach, proves to be only snow ridged by the breeze, reflecting the light from the burnished facets of its myriad crystals. Anon, you feel certain that a deep ravine is directly in the way, the gloomy depths of which will have to be traversed; but the heart throbs more lightly when the imaginary cleft turns out to be only the shadow of a passing cloud. The silence is intense, and the listening ear fails to catch the faintest sounds, except it be the breathing of the panting dogs, the cheery tinkle of their neck-bells, and the rough crunch, crunch of the snow-shoes as they splinter the crisply-frozen crust upon the snow. How vividly these scenes come back to my memory! I can recall even now the various incidents that marked each night journey over the ice-covered waters of Lake Huron.

The arrival of the mails at the mines was so punctual,

that the day on which they were expected was kept as a kind of general holiday. The miners left their work, and the women and children their warm stoves, to group together upon the landing-place where the sleigh track led off across the lake; and it was quite a study to watch the many anxious faces gazing intently into the hazy distance, in hopes of being first to catch a glimpse of the bearers of the good or bad news, as perchance it might turn out to be, from the "old country."

The keenest and best-sighted at last proclaims the coming of the mail; others very soon make it out—a mere speck, however, as yet—moving over the snow towards the mines. Nearer and nearer the loaded sleighs approach, and soon they are at the landing, when fifty willing hands rapidly unpack the sleighs, and sturdy men rush off with the bags of letters to the primitive post-office. There is no such institution as a postman; hence the system of delivery is managed in this fashion. The postmaster unlocks and unseals the letter-bags, and tumbles their contents out upon a large table; then, picking up a letter and reading the address, he proclaims, in a stentorian tone of voice, that there is a letter for—say Jack Robinson; then Jack Robinson comes to the front, and, if there is any postage due, he has to pay it before he can obtain his letter; and so on the postmaster reads the addresses and delivers the letters until the stock is exhausted. The post-office presents a singular spectacle after the distribution of the mail, which comes only about once a month. The assembly divide into little groups, and each group has its own joys and sorrows. All is in public, compared with the privacy with which letters at home are perused. Soon the groups break up and disappear, and each goes back to his daily avocation; the Indians and the dog-sleighs take their departure; and everything settles down into the hum-drum routine of daily life at the mines, until the recurrence of another month brings about a similar scene on the arrival of Her Majesty's mail.

THE CHINESE NEW YEAR IN BATAVIA.

BY THE REV. DR. J. MUEHLSEHN ARNOLD, BATAVIA.

LIVING in this great emporium of the East, I have opportunities of observing the customs and manners of various nations. The Chinese form a large proportion of the population. I send a sketch of "The Chinese New Year in Batavia," as likely to interest the readers of the "Leisure Hour."

The chronology of the Chinese commences 2637 before Christ, and counts by cycles of sixty years each. The year 1868, according to this calculation, is therefore the fifth of the 76th cycle. The Chinese years are properly speaking *solar*; yet, since the months are always *lunar*, the year is dependent on both luminaries. The new moon which is nearest the 15° of the sign of Aquarius, when the sun enters into that sign, is always the first day of the new year.

The Chinese months are alternately large and small, i.e., they have either thirty or twenty-nine days. Since, however, such a year of twelve lunar months amounts only to 355 days, there is interpolated every third year, at the time when the sun does not enter into any zodiacal sign, an "after month," an "after March," or an "after August," by which the year receives thirteen months. The sun, therefore, once more obtains the mastery; and there is a vast deal of stupid superstition mixed up with it. At a solar eclipse, the Chinese say, "The celestial dog devours the sun;" and the Emperor commands all officers of state to throw themselves into mourning, and to pray that the sun be spared

in this hour of trial. If clouds cover the sky so as to prevent the solar eclipse being seen, the Emperor receives the congratulations of the people, "because Heaven, for the sake of the imperial virtues, spares the eyes of his Majesty from so sad a spectacle!" Before proceeding to a brief description of the new year, I wish to name that the day by the Chinese is divided into twelve shishin instead of twenty-four hours.

The new year, which this year (1867) fell on the 18th of February, is always an occasion of unbounded festivity and hilarity, as if the whole population threw off the old year with a shout, and clothed themselves in the new with their change of garments. Preparations go on for five days before; but evidences of the approach of this chief festival appear some weeks previous. The principal streets are lined with tables, upon which articles of dress, furniture, and fancy toys are disposed for sale. You see monster frogs in coloured paper, horses, birds, crocodiles, some of them showing considerable artistic design. The expense incurred is considerable, and often curious relics are brought forth to turn into money. Superiors give presents to their servants and dependants, and shopkeepers send an acknowledgment of favours to their customers. We received sugar candy and sweetmeats. One of the most common gifts of the lower order is a pair of slippers.

Among the stands for presents are other tables at which persons are seated, provided with pencils and gilt red paper of various sizes, on which they write appropriate sentences for the season, to be posted upon the doorposts and lintels of dwellings and shops, or suspended from the halls; to which I shall presently refer.

Small strips of red and gilt paper, some bearing the word *fah*, happiness; large and small red candles gaily painted, and other things used in their worship, are likewise sold in stalls and shops. As if to wash away all the uncleanness of the past year, water is applied profusely to everything in the house.

But a still more praiseworthy custom is that of settling accounts and paying debts. The shopkeepers wait upon their customers; creditors, and debtors, to settle matters. No debt is allowed to overpass the next new year without settlement or arrangement of some sort, if it can be avoided. Many wind up by bankruptcy, and the general consequence of this great pay-day is scarcity of money, resort to the pawnbrokers, and low price of all kinds of goods and articles. As the old year departs, all the account books in Chinese shops are burned. Devout persons, of whom there are but few, also settle with their gods, and during a few days before the new year the temples are usually thronged by devotees, both male and female, rich and poor. Some fast, and engage priests to pray for them, that their sins may be pardoned, while they prostrate themselves before the images, amidst the din of gongs, drums, and bells, and thus clear off the old score. Crackers are fired off to drive away evil spirits, and the worship of the ancestors, as usual, takes the precedence.

On New Year's Eve the streets are full of people, all hurrying to and fro to conclude any business still left undone. Some are busy pasting the five papers upon their lintels, signifying their desire that the five great blessings which constitute human happiness may be theirs—namely, long life, riches, health, love of virtue, and a natural death.

Above these are pasted sentences like these:—"May the five blessings descend upon this door." Or, "May rich customers ever enter this door." Or, "May Heaven confer happiness." The door-posts of others are adorned with plain, or gilt and red paper.

In the hall are suspended scrolls, more or less costly, containing antithetical sentences carefully chosen. A literary man, for instance, would have distichs like the following:—

"May I be so learned as to secrete in my mind three myriads of volumes."

"May I know the affairs of the world for 6,000 years."

Other professions and tastes would exhibit sentences of a different character.

Boat people are peculiarly liberal of their paper prayers, pasting them on every board and oar in their boats, and suspending them from the stern in scores, making the vessel flutter with gaiety. The farmers paste them on their barns, trees, baskets, and implements, as if nothing should remain without a blessing. The house is neat and clean to the highest degree, and purified more than seven times by religious ceremonies or lustrations, firing of crackers—the last of which being meant, as already named, for the expulsion of evil spirits.

A great diversity of local usages is observed at this period, in different parts of China itself. In Amoy, *e.g.*, the custom of "surrounding the furnace" is generally practised. The family sup on New Year's Eve with a pan of charcoal under the table, as a supposed preservation against fire. Supper being ended, wooden lamp-stands are brought out and spread upon the pavement, with a heap of gold and silver paper, which is set on fire, after all the demons have been warned off by a volley of fire-crackers. The embers are then divided into twelve heaps, and their manner of going out carefully watched, as a prognostic of the kind of weather to be expected the ensuing year. Many persons wash their bodies in warm water, made aromatic by the infusion of leaves, as a security against diseases. This ceremony, and ornamenting the ancestral house (of which more on another occasion), and garnishing the whole house with inscriptions, pictures, flowers, and fruits, occupy most of the night.

The stillness of the streets and closed shops on New Year's morning is striking. The red papers on the doors have been removed. You now read sentences like these:—

"Yesterday, in the third watch, the old year passed; to-day, with music and drums, the new year begins."

Or: "Look where you will you witness festival array; everywhere there is bowing and salutation."

Or: "Heaven grows in years, man grows in age."

Or "Spring fills the whole world, and fortune the house." These gay papers are interspersed with blue ones, announcing that during the past year death has come among the inmates of the house—a silent admonition to the passers-by. In some places white, yellow, and carnation-coloured papers are employed with the blue, to designate the degree of deceased kindred. Etiquette requires the mourners to remain within doors.

In a few hours the streets begin to be filled with well-dressed persons, hastening in sedans or on foot, or here and there in carriages, to make their calls. Those who cannot afford to buy a new suit hire one for the occasion; so that a Chinese master hardly knows his own servants in their finery. Much of the visiting, however, is done by cards, on which is stamped an emblematic device representing the three happy wishes—for children, rank, and long life.

Towards evening the crowds are so dense that it is with difficulty you can make your way through them; as then the extraordinary Chinese show, called the Jenggh, is carried about on men's shoulders. It consists of a wooden platform, oblong or square, like a huge

tray, on which a scene is erected, fairy-like and fragile in appearance, with living children perched in the most startling and seemingly impossible positions imaginable.

In driving out in the direction we knew they would pass, we suddenly came upon a moving mass of people, in the centre of which came towering along, borne on the shoulders of four natives, a large platform, over which a white goose was represented in the act of flying, with the neck stretched out, and dipping its beak into a flower, the plant of which stood in a substantial flower-pot. Thus slightly attached, the goose is made strong enough to balance a young girl of at least seven or eight years old on its tail. The girl apparently stands erect, gorgeously dressed, a lofty head-gear composed of flowers, spangles, and feathers adorning her head; but in reality she sits on an iron rod, at the top of which is a seat, to which she is firmly strapped, all being concealed by her long robe, beneath which a pair of false legs and feet complete the deception. In fact, all the designs are skilfully made of iron, so ingeniously and delicately resting on an almost invisible base, as to produce the effect of the children standing in mid-air, or only lightly touching their feet on something too frail to support them. Whilst poised up on high, they reach the upper branches of trees, and soar above the roofs of houses, with immense self-possession. They wave in one hand a long feathered wand, gracefully bowing right and left. As flaming torches at the end of long bamboo poles were carried by the attendants, from which large sparks and bits of lighted wood fell about, some on the backs of our horses, we were but too thankful to accept the kind invitation of a lady to accompany her to a rich Chinaman's house, before which all these processions were to stop. We made our way through the crowd, and reached it before a Jenggh arrived. The large courtyard in which the house stood was thronged with natives, all eager to see the sights. The verandah was crowded with self-invited guests, like ourselves, many unknown to the owner of the house, a good-tempered, sleek-looking man, who, with his sons, was busy dispensing hospitality—ordering wine, beer, and ices to be handed about, considering this influx of spectators a great compliment. A few, ourselves amongst the number, he invited to see the interior of his house. Behind the verandah was a magnificent hall, handsomely furnished with European mahogany and leather chairs and sofas, many tables, and English engravings in handsome frames round the walls. One particularly attracted our attention, being the Meet of the Vine Hounds, Hants, with the Duke of Wellington in the foreground. The rest were scenes from English history, doubtless picked up at sales, whither Chinamen always resort, and are the highest bidders. Beyond this hall was a smaller compartment, in the midst of which was a large, square, shallow lake, cleverly supplied with water from the clouds, there being no roof above it, but a thin network of wire stretched over the open space to allow the rain to fall through, which was also caught by pipes around—a most ingenious contrivance for keeping the house cool, as well as for a bath.

Beyond this marble bath-room was another spacious apartment, where two little smartly-dressed children of the host were regaling themselves with tea and sweetmeats spread on the floor, with their native female attendants also squatting by their sides. A centre table was laden with sweets and fancy dishes for the guests, and at a side-table a nice white china tea-service, with a ten-pot of newly-made hot tea, stood ready for any to help themselves. The hostess, according to etiquette,

remaining behind in a smaller room still farther back, only appeared a short time to show us the back verandah, which opened into a small garden of shrubs. Returning to the front verandah, we saw the guests there partaking of champagne, when presently another Jengeh was brought into the court-yard on bamboo poles, which supported it on the shoulders of the bearers; they then set it down on its four legs most gently and cautiously, one man carrying a kind of long crutch, which he placed under the arm of the standing girl to lessen the shock of her being lowered, and also to support her if fatigued, which only one appeared to be. This poor child evidently found her temporary elevation very painful, for she leaned from side to side in great discomfort, and was unable, either from weariness or being uncomfortably strapped into her seat, to take the cup of tea usually offered. It sadly lessened the pleasure of the scene to see her borne off, perhaps to endure this misery till dawn of day. She was also perched on a bird, but not in a more perilous position than the one just described. I will pass on to another more happy exhibition, of which the accompanying rude sketch will give some idea. In the midst of the platform rose up two small whitish rocks, which we found were intended for breakers, on the top of which was a boat, with a little child sitting in it holding a rose in her hand. A long snake, or small sea-serpent, curling its body over the end of the boat, which it only just touches at one point, thrusts its head out to the flower, and on the tail, extended in the air, stands a tall girl of eight or nine. She was perfectly composed, and gladly took a cup of tea, seeming rather to enjoy the scene, never tiring of waving her plume-wand elegantly from side to side.

After resting about ten minutes, this Jengeh was slowly raised and borne off, accompanied by torches before and behind. The intervals were filled up by Malay dancers, some dressed in odds and ends of European apparel, some in snow-white garments and turbans; others in the native costume, brilliant red or amber cotton jackets. One native, shabbily dressed in a drab wide-awake and old brown cloth coat, danced and gesticulated with the others, each fanning himself before and behind in the most ludicrous manner, and making grimaces. This performance took place in a small space of less than eight feet long, for the crowd pressed round them so closely that three or four had only room just to exchange places. Then came a snake dance. A snake about the size of a man's arm, and six or seven feet long, is twined round the body of a man who, holding the neck of it in his hand, fiercely twists himself about, thrusting the head into every one's face who comes near. He then unwinds the snake and passes it on to others. Then came an Arab, with white robe and turban, who snatched up a piece of lighted wood and held it in his mouth till it went out, pretending to swallow it. This he repeated many times. One more Jengeh described will suffice to show the originality of the devices. On the platform stood a Dutch house, red-tiled and green-shuttered, like a doll's house. Behind rose what we supposed to be intended for a bridge, being a semi-arched road rising almost perpendicularly. On this stood a girl, as usual with a somewhat cumbrous and unwieldy head-dress, highly decorated, fanning herself or bowing. A smaller and younger child sits generally on the platform, as being the less dangerous situation.

These singular exhibitions, peculiar to the Chinese, are supposed to have illustrated originally some historical or mythological events, though they now vary every year. There were formerly such frequent accidents, arising from the great height to which the designs

were raised—ladders being placed on the top of a bird, we were told, and a child propped upon them, and similar extravagances—that Government interfered, forbidding erections of such a dangerous height. Parents let out their children by the night at one hundred to two hundred rupees; but, expensive and perilous as these annual spectacles undoubtedly are, they continue to be a never-failing amusement during the celebration of the Chinese New Year.



THE READING GIRL.

In 1861 an Exhibition of Art and Industry was held at Florence. To foreign visitors this was an interesting opportunity of observing the condition and progress of Italian taste and ingenuity. But the Italians themselves made the occasion an inauguration festival of their newly acquired national independence. There was a spirit of freedom abroad in those days, which stirred to its depths the tide of popular sentiment. On the days of free admission, when the building was thronged with the people, crowds were always gathered round the statue of a young girl, reading from an open book. There was little, at first sight, to attract the gaze of the vulgar. The features of the girl, though intelligent, were plain, and her book was supported on the back of a common rush-bottomed chair. In countries less educated in art the eyes of the crowd would have turned to more showy sculptures. But in Italy the beauty of art, when truest to nature, is more widely appreciated. A stranger seeing the crowds round this statue might

conclude that much of the interest was due to the figure. But on drawing near he would find that a deeper feeling was at work. On the page before her was a passage printed, which had indeed a magic for Italians, and for Florentines most of all. It is an extract from Niccolini's tragedy, "Arnaldo da Brescia," which was not allowed to be printed, much less acted in Tuscany, in the days of the grand dukes. It turns on the reforming efforts and the death of Arnold of Brescia, who, as early as the first half of the twelfth century, aspired to make of a free Rome the centre of a united Italy. The passage is where Arnold, when given up by the Emperor Barbarossa to his cruel enemy Pope Adrian, mounts the pile of martyrdom at the gate of the Castle of St. Angelo.

"God makes a prophet of me; in accord
I see the Lombard people plight their faith,
From twenty cities flung abroad to heaven,
Rises in blood and ashes one sole flag.
The Company of Death* falls to the ground
Beseeching the Eternal: flies to heaven
From those unflinching lips the oath that strikes
The tyrant pale, scatters his hirelings round him,
And plucks his banner down by hands of pith.
That proud one stands aghast; and to the ground,
Once pathway for his triumphs, flings himself,
Borne down by the first onset, till he hide
His shame amid the slaughter of his friends.
I see the Germans flee across the Alps,
Their greedy eagle dragged in the mire,
Their crown made a redeemed people's mock."

The sculptor, Pietro Magni, was one who entered fully into the patriotic as well as artistic sympathies of his nation. Twice he had laid down his mallet for a musket, and had served two campaigns under Garibaldi, as one of the *Cacciatori dei Alpi*. He is now Professor in the Academy of Milan. From the style of San Giorgio, his master, and older classical styles, Magni has widely departed. Professing to follow life actual, not ideal, he is one of the most conspicuous of the school of "naturalists." In the "Reading Girl" he has made allowable use of naturalism, retaining sufficient homeliness to command the sympathy of the multitude, at the same time without any sacrifice of what is due to the highest taste and art.

The statue was exhibited at the International Exhibition in Hyde Park in 1862. It was purchased by the London Stereoscopic Company, whose photographs have made it familiar in many English homes.

THE ALBERT MEMORIAL IN HYDE PARK.

On the abandonment of the intention to raise a vast monolithic obelisk on the site of the Exhibition of 1851, several of the most eminent architects were invited to submit designs for a national monument to the memory of H.R.H. the Prince Consort, and that of Mr. G. Gilbert Scott, R.A., was selected.

Mr. Scott's design, though in some sense a "memorial cross," differs widely in type from the form usually described by that term. It is, in fact, a vast canopy or shrine, overshadowing a colossal statue of the personage to be commemorated, and itself enriched throughout with artistic illustrations of or allusions to the arts and sciences fostered by the Prince, and the virtues which adorned his character.

The canopy or shrine which forms the main feature of the memorial is raised upon a platform, approached on all sides by a vast double flight of steps, and stands upon a basement or podium rising from this elevated platform,

* A body of warriors who had bound themselves under this name to gain freedom for their country or die.

to a level of about twelve feet from the ground. Upon the angles of this podium stand the four great clusters of granite shafts, twenty feet high, that support the canopy, which is itself arched on each side from these massive pillars, each face being terminated by a gable, and each angle by a lofty pinnacle, while over all rises a flèche or enriched spire of metal-work, surmounted by a gemmed and floriated cross.

Beneath the canopy, and raised upon a pedestal, will be placed the quasi-enthroned statue of the Prince Consort.

The idea of the architect in his design of the canopy, as stated in the printed paper which accompanied his first drawings, was this:—The first conception was a shrine. The exquisite metal and jewelled shrines of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are nearly always ideal models of larger structures, but of structures of which the original type never existed. Their pillars were of gold or silver gilt, enriched with wreaths of exquisite pattern-work in many-coloured enamel. Their arches, gables, and other architectural features were either chased in beautiful foliage cut in gold or silver, or enriched with alternate plaques of enamel pattern work, and of filigree studded with gems. Their roofs were covered with patterns of *repoussé* work or enamel, and enriched with sculptured medallions; the crests of roofs and gables were griled with exquisite open foliage in gold or silver, while every part was replete with sculpture, enamel paintings, and jewellery."

The architect's aim was to reproduce in some degree at full size the ideal structure which these wonderful old jewellers represented in model. This idea could not, of course, be literally carried out, but it has determined the leading characteristics of the monument, and, at least so far as the metal-work is concerned, is being faithfully acted on, while in the more massive parts of the structure it cannot be carried further than to give its tone to the decorations.

The four pillars which support the canopy consist each of eight shafts of polished granite, grouping round a central "core." Four of these are of the beautiful red granite from the Ross of Mull, and are each two feet in diameter at the foot, but slightly tapering upwards. The other four are of a fine, dark gray granite from the Castle Wellan quarries, in the north of Ireland. These are somewhat less than a foot in diameter. The bases are in two heights, the lower one being of the Ross of Mull granite, and the upper being another variety from Castle Wellan, of a colour almost approaching to black marble. The latter are in single stones, each of which, when unwrought, weighed about seventeen tons. The working of each employed eight men for about twenty weeks, and is probably one of the most highly-finished and costly pieces of work executed in granite in modern times, every moulding being wrought with the utmost precision, and brought to the finest polish. The base and capping mouldings of the podium are of two varieties of the Ross of Mull granite, also highly polished.

The structural parts of the canopy, such as its arches, etc., are of Portland stone; and the capitals, thirteen tons weight, of the great pillars are carved out of vast blocks from the quarries of Mr. Whitworth, at Darley Dale, in Derbyshire.

The stonework will be richly carved, and the carved surfaces gilt and enriched by studs of coloured enamel and polished stones, as will the surfaces of the pinnacles, the cornices, etc., polished granite again from time to time appearing in conjunction with the stonework.

The pedestal which will support the statue of the

Prince is polished granite and marble. In this part alone appears the exquisite pink granite from Correnac, a mountain some thirty miles from Aberdeen, where, in the absence of any quarry, the most beautiful of all British granites is found in the boulders which are strewed upon the mountain side. The dado of the pedestal, which is of marble, will be richly carved, gilt, and gemmed, and will in front display the armorial bearings of the Prince.

The surrounding flights of steps, with the large pedestals which will support the groups of sculpture at the outer angles, are of finely wrought but unpolished granite.

The central statue is being executed by the Baron Marochetti, R.A.—a sitting figure, about 13ft. 6in. high, in bronze, gilt, and in parts enamelled.

The groups of sculpture at the outer angles of the steps are intended to have reference to the International Exhibitions and their contributors from all parts of the world, symbolical figures of the four quarters of the globe being introduced, seated on characteristic animals—as the bull, the elephant, the camel, and the bison—and surrounded by representative figures of different countries. These are being executed by Mr. McDowell, R.A., Mr. Foley, R.A., Mr. Theed, and Mr. Bell. Each group will be about 11ft. high and 13ft. 4in. square at its base.

On projecting counterforts at the angles of the podium will be found other groups, representing allegorically Agriculture, Engineering, Commerce, and Manufacture. These will be by Mr. Weekes, R.A., Mr. Calder Marshall, R.A., Mr. Thorneycroft, and Mr. Lawlor. The dado of the podium itself will present a continuous range of sculpture in alto-relievo, containing, in the manner of the *Hémicycle des Beaux Arts*, by Delaroche, grouped statues, life-size, of the principal professors of Poetry (with Music), Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, the two former by Mr. H. H. Armstead, the two latter by Mr. J. B. Philip. The models of all these figures are far advanced. The actual sculpture is in hand, and (as is the case with all which has yet been mentioned) is executed in what is known as the Carrara quarries, where it is procured, as "Campanella," from its ringing like a bell. This marble, though harder than any usually imported into this country, has been selected to insure durability.

On the angles of the monument will be eight statues in bronze, parcel gilt, representing the sciences of Astronomy, Geometry, Geology, Chemistry, Rhetoric, Philosophy, Physiology, and Medicine, by Mr. H. H. Armstead and Mr. J. B. Philip.

In the tympana of the gables and in the spandrels of the arches will be mosaic pictures relating to the arts whose professors are represented below, those in the gables being allegorical figures representing the Arts, and the spandrels illustrating their practical operations. These will be executed in mosaic by Signor Salvati from cartoons by Mr. J. R. Clayton. The vaulting of the canopy will also be enriched with mosaic. The architectural carving is by Messrs. Farmer and Brindley.

The ornamental metal-work, comprising the flèche (rising to 175 feet from the ground), the roofs and gables, and the bands round the great pillars, are executed by Mr. Skedmore, of Coventry. The flèche consists of an internal framework of iron clothed with a highly-enriched exterior of lead and copper, and adorned with gold enamel, inlayings, and polished stones.

In the ornamentation of the metal-work will appear the armorial badges, mottoes, etc., of the Prince, and in niches in the flèche will be figures representing the

moral and Christian virtues, the whole surmounted by a large and highly-enriched cross.

The dedicatory inscription will surround the structure immediately below the main cornice.

Much praise is due to Mr. Kelk, M.P., who undertook the contract for the erection of so noble a piece of work as this Memorial, and executed it for the committee without any remuneration to himself. It is a great pleasure to find that the work gives general satisfaction, the whole being executed with much care and judgment. All the materials are of the best quality, and the mechanics employed are first-class men, under the watchful superintendence of Mr. W. Cross, director of the works.

It may be mentioned that the site on which the Memorial is being erected is, as nearly as may be, at the intersecting point of the central lines of the two great International Exhibitions originated by the Prince Consort.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

NAY, no dreaming to-night. You and I will wake and watch:
With the shutters opened wide and the door upon the latch,
Patiently sit by the fire with open eye and ear,
Waking and watching to-night of all nights in the changing year.

The marshes stiffened in ice, long ere the sun went down;
And the ragged bulrush and reed wore a glorified golden crown,
As the crimson rays shot forth from the far-off western glow,
Tinting the dreary pools and the patches of frozen snow.

Slowly the great sun sank, and the heavens grew black with cold;
From the snowy hill leapt down, like a famine-pinched wolf on the fold,
The hungry howling blast, and its teeth were sharp for blood,
As it scoured the open plain and ravined along the wood.

Then rings the curfew bell from the church tower far away,
And the sailor counts the strokes from his vessel moored out in the bay;
Pausing upon the deck in his slippery walk up and down,
With a wistful glance at the lights of the quiet slumbering town.

Oh, long is the winter night! But before to-morrow's dawn
We shall see the Old Year die—we shall see the New Year born:
So goes this wondrous world, with its moments, and months, and years,
So goes this life of ours, with its manifold hopes and fears!

Alas, for the idle hand and the idle blood in the vein!
Is there nothing to shock the heart—is there nothing to strike the brain,
And stir them to action and life, ere the sum of the years be past,
And the total of all be dreams and folly from first to last?

* * * * *

Was that a sigh in the room? Did you hear a long-drawn sigh?
See, it is midnight now, and the year is about to die.
Let us stand with awe in our hearts. Lo, the New Year fronts the Old,
And the young lips gently kiss the lips that are fixed and cold.

* * * * *

The heavens are rich with light. Where, where is the bright New Star?
Oh for the dominant faith that the soul might look out afar,
And hear as the shepherds heard on the plains of Bethlehem;
And see as the Magi saw!—it will lead us as it led them.

Now for the New Year's work. Thank God for his loving care.
Merciful Master of Life, to Thee do we make our prayer:
Help us to labour in hope till the corn and the grapes appear,
And we enter to rest with Thee in the joy of the Endless Year.

ALFRED NORRIS.

Varieties.

VICTORIAN EMIGRATION.—Persons anxious to reconcile contradictory statements about the condition of our colonial possessions, and especially Australia, will do well to remember that that continent is made up of what, in our northern hemisphere, we should call many nations; and that, as we never speak generally of the condition of the labour market of Europe, but particularly of the depression or healthiness in each country, never confounding the bores of Russia with the artisans of England, so it is wise to particularise with regard to Australia, and to know that simultaneously there may be paralysis and stagnation in Queensland, floods and depression in New South Wales, competency and quiet comfort in South Australia, with abundance and a high state of prosperity in Victoria. If we will remember this fact, and not forget that mercantile failures, misfortunes, and misdoings here are reflected there as faithfully as a face in a glass, we shall not be very surprised that just now Australian shadows are not so pleasing or so pretty as they have been, and as I venture to predict they will be again before long.—*Maria S. Rye.*

THE DIVORCE COURT.—In 1866, 215 petitions were filed in the Divorce Court for a dissolution of marriage, 8 for a declaration of nullity of marriage, 64 for a judicial separation, and 17 for restitution to conjugal rights. 183 judgments were given. Since the Court was established, nine years ago, 2,751 petitions have been filed and 1,650 judgments given upon those applications. The public would like to learn the nature of the judgments, so that it might be known how many marriages are dissolved in a year; but this is what the registrar who makes this annual return always omits to state.

THE AMENITIES OF AUTHORSHIP.—M. Alexandre Dumas, desiring to give to one of his novels—"Les Blancs et les Bleus,"—a tone of historical accuracy in the details, applied to one of the public libraries of Paris to have communicated to him all the documents connected with the 13th *Vendémiaire*. His application was refused, on which he addressed the subjoined letter to the Emperor Napoleon III:—"Illustrious *Confrère*,—When you undertook to write the life of the Conqueror of the Gauls, all the libraries were eager to place at your disposal the documents which they contain. The result is a work superior to others, in the circumstance that it brings together the greatest number of historical documents. Engaged at the present moment in writing the life of another Cæsar, named 'Napoleon Bonaparte,' I require documents relating to his appearance on the scene of this world. In brief, I should like to have all the pamphlets which the 13th *Vendémiaire* brought forth. I have asked for them at the library; they have been refused. There remains to me no other means than to apply to you, my illustrious *confrère*, to whom nothing is refused, to beg you to ask for these works in your own name, at the library, and to be good enough, when you shall have received them, to place them at my disposal. If you will be so kind as to grant this request you will have rendered me a service which, in a literary sense, I shall never forget. I have the honour to be, with respect, illustrious author of the 'Life of Cæsar,' your very humble and most grateful *confrère*, Alexandre Dumas." The next day the writer received through M. Daruy the pamphlets asked for.

DR. VALPY'S VERSE.—The late Dr. Marsh, when on a visit at Tollymore Park, in the summer of 1837, told Lord Roden that a remarkable change took place in the views of his old schoolmaster, the well-known Dr. Valpy, of Reading, in his latter days, repeating a verse he had written as his confession of faith, not long before his death. Lord Roden requested Dr. Marsh to write out the lines for him, and then fastened the paper over the mantel-piece in his study, where it hangs still, now yellow with age. Some time after Lord Roden had adopted this verse for the motto of his study, one of the old heroes of Waterloo, General Taylor, came to visit him at Tollymore. He had not at that time thought much on the subject of religion, and preferred to avoid all discussion on it. But whenever he came into the study to talk with his friend alone, Lord Roden remarked that the eyes of the old soldier invariably rested for a few moments upon the motto over the mantel-piece. At length he broke the ice by saying, "Why, General, you will soon know that verse by heart." "I know it now by heart," replied the General, with emphasis and feeling. From the time of that visit a change came over his spirit and life.

No one who was intimately acquainted with him could doubt its reality. During the following two years he corresponded regularly with Lord Roden about the things which concerned his peace, always concluding his letters by quoting the favourite motto. At the end of that time, the physician who had attended General Taylor wrote to Lord Roden to say that his friend had departed in peace, and that the last words which fell from his dying lips were those which he had learnt to love in his lifetime:—

"In peace let me resign my breath,
And Thy salvation see;
My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me."

It happened in after years that Lord Roden told this story at the house of a near neighbour. A young relative of the family, an officer of the army, who had recently returned from the Crimea, heard it, but turned carelessly away. Some months later Lord Roden received the intelligence that his young acquaintance was in a rapid decline, and was desirous of seeing him without delay. As he entered the sick-room, the dying man stretched out both hands to welcome him, at the same time repeating those simple lines. "They have been God's message," he said, "of peace and comfort to my heart in this illness, when brought to my memory, after days of darkness and distress, by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter."—*Life of Dr. Marsh.*

CANADIAN SEASONS.—The winter in Canada, though severe, is enjoyable and healthful. Instead of that miserable alternation of rain and fog, snow and sleet, that converts our metropolitan streets into rivers of mud, and our country roads into impassable quagmires, Canada can boast of clear skies, a beautifully clear dry atmosphere, and the entire country "macadamized with crystal." A Canadian winter is precisely like a winter at St. Petersburg, while the summer approximates to that of Paris. The approach of summer is announced by the movements of the animal world. The song-sparrow commences his plaintive ditties in March, and the Canadian robin sings cheerily whilst the snow lies thickly upon the ground. Wild fowl begin to wing their way northward about the middle of April, and the bull-frog is first heard grunting out his importance on St. George's day. The transition from winter to summer in the far west is so sudden that one hardly believes that half a year of icy cold has held everything in bondage. The thick mantle of snow so shields and protects the vegetation, that beneath it the early flowers open their blossoms, the grass springs up fresh and green, and the buds burst into leafage. Then birds and insects make their appearance so mysteriously that when the sun melts the ice and thaws the snow from off the land, everything changes into refulgent summer, as if touched by the wand of an enchanter. To compensate for the want of spring the autumn is prolonged and beautifully mild, and lingers on with its Indian summer, and the golden glory of its sunsets, as late as December. This extraordinary interregnum of delightful weather, styled the Indian summer, is variable in duration and of somewhat uncertain recurrence. The French habitants call it "L'été St. Martin."—J. K. LORD, F.Z.S.

SENSATIONAL LITERATURE AND ART.—The rage for the sensational now thoroughly taints both literature and art, and, strange to say, it is always a fact that when a nation imbibes this love for the fantastic and sensational, it always also imbibes wild wolfish ideas of death. At one of the operas in London lately he had seen a scene with ballet dancers capering in the foreground, and a row of corpses holding the candles behind them. A noble nation is not one which would be pleased by any but beautiful and holy representations of death, yet an English high-caste audience could sit and view a scene like that. The taste penetrates to the very roots of society. During a recent visit of charity children to Hampstead Heath, with its grand old trees, its wide stretch of scenery, its clouds and blue sky above, and its humble wild flowers below, what were these children found talking about? About some dead bodies recently dragged out of the Paddington Canal, coupled with impure speculations as to what had been the previous lives of the victims. The compassionate phase of modern art implies sorrow for the squalor and misery of the poor on every side, which the rich have the power to remove if they like; but whilst such scenes exist there must be something radically wrong in the nation itself.—*Mr. Ruskin's Lecture at the Royal Institution.*